



**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SAVE A LIFE AND “JUST DRIVE”**

***12 Months of Safety Campaign Targets Work Zone Safety and Inattentive Drivers  
State Employs New Tactics to Ensure Safety***

**(March 30, 2004)** – When many of us go to work, the most hazardous thing that might happen is that we get a paper cut or drop a file on a toe. Most of us don’t risk our lives at work each day. But how would that change if when you sharpened your pencil or got a drink at the water cooler, a tractor trailer blew by at 60+ mph just a few feet away? Do you think your heart might race a bit? Today, media representatives had the chance to don a hard hat, vest and become “a construction worker” at the I-695/Joppa Road work zone, where traffic whizzes by at 60 + mph and impatient drivers honk horns and sometimes shout curses.

In the fourth month of the “12 Months of Safety” initiative, the Maryland Department of Transportation, along with the Maryland State Police (MSP), is highlighting work zone safety and inattentive driving.

“Imagine what it would be like if your office or desk were just several feet from a lane of traffic with cars and trucks speeding by at 60 miles per hour,” said Transportation Secretary Robert L. Flanagan. “That is the environment our highway construction crews work in every day. Work zones are unforgiving places for both construction workers and motorists. In fact, four out of five people killed in work zones are not workers – but motorists or passengers. Everyone must focus on safety and motorists must stay alert and slow down when passing through a work zone. Lives are at stake.”

In Maryland, traffic fatalities out number murders by 159 – with 661 traffic deaths in 2002. Additionally, fatalities within work zones more than doubled in the last few years, increasing from seven in 2001 to 17 in 2002. The number of those injured has also increased. Unfortunately, the alarming problem continues and on March 8, near the location of today’s news briefing, a car struck and killed David A. Bowles of Facchina Construction Company, Inc., the contractor for the I-695 construction project.

**(More)**

The State and local contractors recently met and brainstormed changes in tactics on the road in work zones, different techniques for getting drivers to obey speed limits and the most effective and safe enforcement in work zones. Some tactics include the use of additional equipment to protect workers in the road, such as a truck mounted mobile crash cushion (attenuator) used for lane closures outside the areas of concrete barriers. Other suggestions include the use of a traffic “spotter” (person) to monitor traffic flow and alert co-workers of stray vehicles, as well as increased enforcement from the Maryland State Police (MSP) within the work zone.

At today’s news briefing, Transportation Secretary Flanagan and MSP Colonel Hutchins signed a formal memorandum of understanding outlining the supportive relationship in work zones. In addition to providing trooper support within the work zone, the MSP will be available for participation in pre-construction conferences to review the Traffic Control Plans or project phases during which their services will be required. Officers assigned to work zones will be in full uniform with a marked police vehicle.

“I am glad to join with Secretary Flanagan and MDOT in this very important effort,” Maryland State Police Superintendent Colonel Thomas E. Hutchins said. “Driving unsafely in a work zone can be quite costly, both in terms of human lives and the potential for traffic citations and fines. The risks faced by our highway workers are very real and they are risks we intend to diminish.”

Additionally, the State’s new outreach effort, “Just Drive” reminds all of us that we must dedicate our full focus on driving to prevent such tragedies from happening in the future. The educational initiative will feature radio public service announcements and other educational materials. The State released the :30 second “Just Drive” radio public service announcement and unveiled a new highway construction sign featuring an animated “barrel” to help bring a lighter and also more human side to the construction zone alerts.

“SHA’s number one priority is safety. I want our SHA staff as well as our contractors to know that their safety is important to us,” said SHA Administrator Neil J. Pedersen, the Governor’s Highway Safety Representative. “We understand the real dangers that they face each and appreciate the work that they do to keep Maryland moving.”

Inattentive driving contributes to an average of more than 44,000 crashes each year in Maryland. More than 60 percent of those crashes result in injuries and more than 200 of them resulted in one or more fatalities. The majority of crashes involving inattentive driving occur on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. For more information on Work Zone Safety, “Just Drive” and the “12 Months of Safety” campaigns, log onto SHA’s web site at [www.marylandroads.com](http://www.marylandroads.com).

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